

# The Development of Multicultural Education through *Tasamuh* Practice in *Pesantren*, A Case Study from *Pesantren Assalaam*, Central Java, Indonesia

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## Abstract

This study aims to investigate how the practice of *tasamuh* (an Arabic word that literally means tolerance) in Indonesian *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) is employed as a method to teach cultural diversity to the students. This strategy is essential seeing as it employs religious teachings, which significantly influence Muslims as the majority in the country. Recently, *pesantren* has been accused of being a radical and intolerant Islamic educational institution due to the involvement of several of its activists in various religious and ethnical conflicts in the archipelago. However, via *tasamuh* practice, *pesantren Assalaam* have transformed into advocates in support of the development of multicultural education. Based on a qualitative method, this study interviewed a leader and principal as well as teachers. Besides the interviews, a questionnaire was distributed to the students in *pesantren Assalaam*, Central Java, Indonesia, in order to examine the practice of *tasamuh* with the focus on understanding *SARA* (*Suku, Agama, Ras, dan Antar golongan* or Ethnicity, Religion, Race and Social groups) diversity. Understanding *SARA* diversity is the key to maintaining a harmonious life and the coexistence of Indonesian cultural differences. Furthermore, it should be mentioned that this research also observed the learning activities in *pesantren Assalaam*. The results revealed that *pesantren Assalaam* implements *tasamuh* practice to create students who understand and uphold religious tolerance, respect various ethnicities and appreciate many sorts of local cultures. The process of implementing *tasamuh* is imparted in the formal and informal learning activities. Formal learning is taught in the classroom as theory inserted in national and *pesantren* subjects, whilst informal learning is adapted via direct experience in daily activity programmes both on and off campus. To further improve cultural diversity education in *pesantren* through *tasamuh* practice, certain challenges generated by the data must be addressed, such as the inconsistent teaching position of the teachers, avoiding religious truth-claim, the lack of in-service training for the teachers, in addition to the need to design adequate syllabi.

**Key words:** Multicultural education, *pesantren*, *tasamuh*, multicultural Indonesia, Islamic tolerance

## 1. Introduction

Indonesia is an exceedingly multicultural country. This archipelago is home to hundreds of different ethnicities, races, religions and traditional beliefs, as well as local cultures. In the New Order (*Orde Baru*) regime from 1966-1998, the government introduced a specific term called *SARA*, which stands for *Suku, Agama, Ras, dan Antar golongan* or Ethnicity, Religion, Race and Social groups to make people aware of the multicultural atmosphere throughout the country (Yulaelawati and Kuipers, 2009). *SARA* provides Indonesia with both advantages and disadvantages, with Muslims as the majority playing a pivotal role as the decision-makers. One of the advantages is, for instance, Indonesian independence on 17 August 1945. It was proclaimed as the fruit of the great struggle of this multi-cultural existence, when the Muslim majority, commanded by the leaders of *pesantren* and all other citizens regardless of their *SARA* background fought together against Western colonialists. However, when the national elements fail to nurture it, *SARA* diversity is a 'destructive social weapon' in relation to Indonesia, given that it may threaten the unity of the country. In fact, ethnic and religious riots have occurred intermittently in various regions like Kalimantan, Madura and Java for political and economic reasons (Klinken, 2007). *SARA* diversity is a sensitive issue that requires tolerance, respect and appreciation to avoid cultural conflict (Yulaelawati and Kuipers, 2009). Significant efforts to build an understanding of *SARA*

diversity in Indonesia are being conducted by means of education.

*SARA* diversity has serious implications for Indonesian harmony. An inappropriate approach in relation to managing this cultural diversity will lead the country to ethnic, religious and other social conflicts. Muslims as the majority in the country, contribute significantly to nurturing *SARA* diversity. As there are several Muslim organisations, the contribution of Muslims would lead to a dilemma. On the one hand, the existing *SARA* diversity will be controlled and dominated by Muslims, suggesting that it could possibly be used to nurture diversity or dominate other cultural minorities. Conversely, they can invite the diverse cultures to manage this diversity and coexist in peace with the aim of avoiding conflict.

Understanding cultural diversity through education has become a crucial matter in Indonesia since the *Reformasi* (reform) era in 1998 (Faoziah *et al.*, 2016; Rachmawati *et al.*, 2014; Baidhaw, 2007). It is related to the escalating tension on issues pertaining to *SARA* after the *Reformasi* era, which produced sporadic social clashes. For example, regarding the Bali bombing in 2002, where the terrorists targeted foreign tourists who were considered infidels as well as the series of religious struggles between Muslims and Christians in Ambon in 2009 and 2012 (al-Qurtuby, 2013), both involved several *pesantren* activists. In addition, the International Crisis Group (2002) named *Pesantren* Ngruki, a *pesantren* in Central Java, as the centre of radical Islamic education in Southeast Asia. The leader of this *pesantren* is suspected of orchestrating a religious terrorist network. In such tragedies, the public portrays *pesantren* as a school of Islamic intolerance and radicalism (Wildan, 2008).

As these tragedies were massively informed by numerous national and global electronic and social media, people at the local, national and even international level portrayed *pesantren* as having a strong relationship with the dissemination of Islamic intolerance and radicalism. As a consequence, parents, who endorse cultural diversity live as well as Islamic teaching, selectively choose *pesantren* that advocate a moderate theory of Islam.

Despite the negative image of *pesantren*, previous studies revealed that there is a long tradition of disseminating the values of tolerance, respect, togetherness and non-violence in relation to cultural differences in these Islamic boarding schools (Sirry, 2010; Madjid, 1997; Pohl, 2006; Lukens-Bull, 2005). In these studies, Sirry (2010) mentioned that *pesantren*, to some extent, have been supporting multicultural lower-class society in their struggle for a better life. Madjid (1997) provided a variety of evidence that as well as being a place to encourage and disseminate Islamic knowledge, *pesantren* are an agent of change for social, economic and political life in Indonesia. In his article, Pohl (2006), noted that a *pesantren* in Solo, Central Java has made an extraordinary effort by conducting inter-faith dialogue and other civil society programmes for the surrounding communities. In addition, Lukens-Bull (2005) specifically focused his research on the transformation of *pesantren* in East Java in redefining the meaning of *jihad*, which means not only for the holy war to defend Islam but also means to empower civil society in the broader sense. Furthermore, Raihani (2012), reported that *pesantren* are able to prepare students to interact with multicultural communities throughout Indonesia. He also noted that the classroom and non-classroom learning activities in *pesantren* promise the development of a multicultural education, particularly in several national and *pesantren* subjects. Unlike public school which is supervised by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC), *pesantren* are administered by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA), owing to the numerous elements related to religious aspects, such as teaching, attitude, and modelling. It is a non-formal education as most *pesantren* generally have their own independent policies in running education system. However, *pesantren* comprise common attributes; the *Kyai* as the principal leader, mosque as the centre of learning activities, dormitories for students to stay in, *santri* as the students and *kitab kuning*, the traditional set of Islamic texts employed within the Islamic curriculum.

According to Banks (1997), multicultural schools make vital changes which enables students, teachers and other school stakeholders to promote cultural diversity in all aspects of learning. As a religious educational institution, *pesantren* engage in Islamic teachings and assert that religious instruction is essential for Muslims in Indonesia (Madjid, 1997). One sort of Islamic teaching in *pesantren* which is associated with the doctrine of multicultural interaction is the concept of *tasamuh*. However, the understanding of Islam is not monolithic, there are still various Islamic beliefs among various Muslim sects. Even though Islam advocates the teaching of tolerance, a few numbers of Muslims in *pesantren* understand and insist on radicalism to establish an Islamic environment among diverse cultures.

*Tasamuh* is the way in which Muslims learn and practice communicating and interacting with different cultures. In its practice, *tasamuh* is strongly directed by the values of tolerance, respect and appreciation taken from the *Qur'an* (the holy book, consists of 30 chapters and 6,666 verses) and *Hadith* (the Prophet Muhammad's sayings and behaviour, comprising thousands of narrations). The practice of *tasamuh* is implemented particularly when Muslims encounter different religions and faiths, local cultures and numerous types of ethnicities, races, and tribes worldwide (Jamarudin, 2016; Mutawalli, 2016). However, there is a lack of explicit research to explore the relationship between the practice of *tasamuh* and its support for developing a multicultural education in Islamic boarding schools.

This study explores the understanding and practice of *tasamuh* in *pesantren* both in formal and informal learning activities to determine the values, insights and various processes related to the development of multicultural education, including an issue that I

sense is relevant to the topic; in-service training for teachers. It uses a comprehensive approach by examining entire aspects of schooling in *pesantren* to answer the following questions:

1. How does *tasamuh* practice in *pesantren Assalaam* support the development of multicultural education, particularly focusing on the dissemination of religious tolerance, respect of ethnicities and the appreciation of local cultures?
2. What are the influential factors in developing multicultural education in *pesantren Assalaam* via *tasamuh* practice?

In doing so, to provide a contextual landscape and knowledge, this study makes use of the following structure: (1) Indonesian cultural diversity, the national education system, and *pesantren*. This part discusses the position of Indonesia as a vast, culturally diverse country and the role of education in addressing this situation, as well as the position of *pesantren* within it, (2) Multicultural education and the practice of *tasamuh* in *pesantren*. This section reviews the literature pertaining to multicultural education and *tasamuh*. It also explores the possible correlation between them in developing education in support of cultural diversity in *pesantren*, (3) Research Method. This part describes the research site, respondents, data collection design, and method of analysis, (4) Results and discussion will elucidate the findings and its analysis to answer the research questions, and (5) Conclusion, including the limitations and implications for future research.

## 2. Indonesian Cultural Diversity, the National Education System, and *Pesantren*

Indonesia has more than 300 ethnic groups, 700 local cultures and languages, many races, and six religions officially recognised by the government, besides hundreds of local beliefs among its population of 230,000,000 (National Statistics Bureau, 2018). Given this diverse culture, the country's founding fathers realised that conflicts could possibly arise. Therefore, to nurture and maintain these cultural differences they formulated *Pancasila* (five pillars; believe in God, Humanity, Indonesian Unity, Democracy and Social Justice) and *Undang-Undang Dasar 1945* (*UUD 1945* or the Constitution of 1945), as the national foundation and constitution on Indonesia's Independence Day in 1945. The enactment was published after long and heated debates between the nationalists, who struggled for a democratic and non-religious state and Muslim leaders who intended to establish an Islamic state. In these debates, Muslim leaders, who had primarily been educated in *pesantrens*, introduced seven words in the first pillar of *Pancasila*; *dengan kewajiban menjalankan ajaran Islam bagi pemeluknya* (with the obligation to carry out Islamic teachings for their followers) (Ricklefs, 2012). However, finally, to preserve newly created Indonesia's unity, Muslim leaders were willing to eliminate those words.

Effendy (1998) noted that in 1951, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity) was agreed as the national motto, where all the national elements of diverse cultures must uphold and strengthen the unity of the country above their diversity. However, in 1965, a national tragedy occurred when the Communist Party attempted to overthrow the government in a failed coup that resulted in thousands of military and civilian, predominantly *pesantren* students and leaders, casualties. Consequently, the new regime, known as *Orde Baru*, emerged with the support of the Muslim majority and the military.

During its government, *Orde Baru* introduced the term *SARA* to conserve cultural diversity. With this term, Indonesian citizens has to behave sensitively towards diverse ethnicities, religions, races, tribes and intergroups, for the reason that these sensitive matters may possibly ignite cultural conflict and violence. However, *Orde Baru* was unsuccessful in nurturing *SARA* in an appropriate way when it constructed *Pancasila* as the one and only principle for all aspects of Indonesian life (Effendy, 1998).

In 1985, a number of Muslims protested against this policy since they adhere to the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* as their way of life. Moreover, they also believe that the position of *Pancasila* is less than that of the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*; hence, they are fearful that the government will restrict Muslims from practising their rituals in the name of diversity and harmony as driven by *Pancasila*. For numerous Muslims, putting the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* as the ultimate principle before others is unnegotiable. The regime responded to this protest with persecution and violence and oppressed opponents, including Islamic parties. Subsequently, Indonesia was under the control of an authoritarian regime and issues concerning *SARA* became a latent danger that remained a constant threaten.

The *Orde Baru* regime fell in 1998 due to the economic, social, and political situation Indonesia was experiencing. This brought about the *Reformasi* (Reform) era, marked by freedom of expression for all groups in the country. During this time, issues regarding *SARA* emerged and increased dramatically in the country and a significant number of Muslims voiced their support for the establishment of an Islamic state. In addition, several cultural conflicts and episodes of violence emerged across the country, such as the Poso conflict which took place on the island of Sulawesi between Muslims and Christians, which occurred in 2000 (*Republika*, 2016), the Sampit riot on the island of Kalimantan; violence between ethnic Madura and Dayak in 2001 (*Republika*, 2013), and in 2016, the rejection of a number of Muslims on the candidacy of a Chinese-Christian as the Governor of Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia (*Kompas*, 2016). Therefore, in order to avoid further unrest and maintain the country's harmony, Indonesian scholars suggested that an understanding of Indonesian cultural diversity by means of schooling is essential (Hanurawan and Waterworth, 1997; Rachmawati, *et al.*, 2014). In addition, the government introduced several significant policies to support this

form of education. Rahman and Kusakabe (2018), noted that these policies span from the national constitution relating to the *UUD 1945* amendment to the Presidential Decree and Ministerial regulation. For instance, the amendment to *UUD 1945* in 2003 clearly proclaimed that cultural diversity is a national cultural richness, which consists of ethnicities, religions and local beliefs, races, and local cultures. Regarding education on cultural diversity, Baidhawiy (2007) argues that in the Indonesian context, religious-based education and institution have a prominent role for the reason that the attitude and behaviour of Indonesian Muslims is greatly affected by religious teachings.

The importance of religious teachings for Indonesian Muslims is reflected in their national education system. It is divided into two distinctive parts, general and religious education. General education provides education for those who require subjects which are more irreligious than religious. Conversely, religious education contains subjects that are more religious than secular. Both education systems are managed by different ministries: (1) The MoEC administers general education from elementary schools to higher education; and (2) The MoRA manages religious schools (*madrasah*), which are also operated from elementary schools to higher education.

Besides formal *madrasah*, there is another prominent religious educational institution which is inculcating Islamic knowledge extensively in Indonesia, called *pesantren*. *Pesantren* is recognised as the first Islamic school model and was established in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Prior to 2003, *pesantren* were not included in the national educational system because it primarily teaches Islamic knowledge in its *madrasahs* or schools. In addition, the regimes before the *Reformasi* era tended to abandon religious education as it was perceived to be irrelevant as regards the country's development, which is inclined to follow a secular education system (Azra, 2012). On the contrary, *pesantren* have been involved in the country's civil movement and development since the colonial era in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, owing to the combination of Islamic teachings to fight against Dutch, British and Japanese colonialism. For instance, the *Resolusi Jihad* (Holy War resolution), in 1945, declared by Hasyim Asy'ari, a prominent *pesantren* leader and the founder of Indonesia's largest Islamic organisation, namely *Nahdhatul Ulama* (NU), was a sort of holy war commanded by Islamic teachings and seen as a command to chase away the British army and its allies in Surabaya East Java and to defend the newly formed multicultural independent country (NU, 2016). This verdict attracted thousands of young people in the city and beyond to go to the battlefield on 10 November 1945. Hence, this day is commemorated annually in Indonesia as National Heroes Day. A further example was that the *pesantren* leaders and activists mostly opposed the introduction of *Pancasila* as the only way of life for the Indonesian people in the *Orde Baru* era in 1985. Since every religion has an ultimate believe system, they argued that the policy was strict and prohibited the freedom of religious education and practices of Muslims and non-Muslims (Effendy, 1998).

*Pesantren* were considered part of the national education system in 2003, when the Indonesian government introduced the National Education Act 2003. In this Act, *pesantren* were officially included as part of the national education system. The official acknowledgment of *pesantren* by the government placed *pesantren* under the management of the MoRA. The unique characteristic of *pesantren*, such as having a great deal of Islamic teaching related to knowledge, various typologies and lengthy periods of study which take up to 24 hours, mean that *pesantren* is recognised as an education that is non-formal (See Table 1).

**Table 1.** Schools Management in the Indonesian Educational System

No.	Schools Type under the MoRA	Schools Type under the MoEC
1.	Formal School: - <i>Madrasah Ibtidaiyah</i> (Islamic Elementary School) - <i>Madrasah Tsanawiyah</i> (Islamic Junior High School) - <i>Madrasah Aliyah</i> (Islamic Senior High School) - Islamic Higher Education (Islamic Universities, Islamic Institute)	Formal School: - Elementary School - Junior High School - Senior High School - Senior Vocational School - Higher Education (Universities, Academy, Institute)
2.	Non-Formal School: - <i>Qur'anic</i> School (where children attend their local mosque to learn to read and recite the Qur'an, normally in the afternoon) - <i>Madrasah Diniyah</i> (for children to learn basic Islamic knowledge) - <i>Pesantren</i> (Islamic Boarding School)	Non-Formal School: - <i>Kejar Paket</i> A, B, C (Learning group package of A, B, C; A for Elementary school, B for Junior High School, and C for Senior High School) - Higher Education ( <i>Universitas Terbuka</i> (Open University))

**Source:** Compiled by author from the MoRA (2018) and the MoEC (2018)

A *pesantren* is an Islamic boarding school where students reside on campus to study. This school comprises the *Kyai* (top leader) as the central figure, the mosque as the main centre of learning, *Santri* as the students, dormitories for the students to reside in, as well as Islamic classical books to study (Dhofier, 1999). *Pesantren* mostly operates secondary schools consisting of Junior High Schools (JHS), with students aged between 13-15 years old in grades VII to IX and Senior High Schools (SHS), with students aged between 16-18 years old in grades X to XII.

The MoRA divides *pesantren* into three categories: ‘*Ashry* or modern, *Salafy* or traditional and *Campuran* or mixed. Modern *pesantren* adopt government curricula with a minimum number of national subjects. The traditional *pesantren* implements only the *pesantren* curriculum which is merely Islamic studies without the national curriculum, while mixed *pesantren* combine modern and traditional curricula, with more than 70% being national curriculum subjects (The MoRA, 2016). Currently, there are more than 28,000 *pesantren* with over 3,500,000 students scattered across the country in all 34 provinces. More than 95% of them are operated privately (The MoRA, 2018) (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** Statistics relating to *Pesantren*, National School Numbers and Students

No	School type	School Numbers		Male Students		Female students	
		JHS	SHS	JHS	SHS	JHS	SHS
1.	National School	38,960	13,495	5,173,914	2,128,893	4,951,810	2,654,752
		Total		7,302,807		7,606,562	
Grand total		52,455		14,909,369			
2.	<i>Pesantren</i>	28,194		JHS	SHS	JHS	SHS
				1,561,047	520,301	1,410,943	470,409
Total				2,081,348		1,881,352	
Grand total				3,962,700			

Source: MoEc (2018) and MoRA (2018)

Nowadays, after the acknowledgment of *pesantren* as part of the national educational system, a substantial number of *pesantren* have transformed into modern Islamic educational institutions (Pohl, 2011). Even though the *MoRA* has created three types of *pesantren*, Indonesian Muslims have a tendency to acknowledge two popular typologies; specifically Traditional and Modern (Azra and Afrianty, 2005). The mixed *pesantren* typically include the Modern *pesantren* typology. The current increasing number of each typology of *pesantren* is as illustrated in Table 3.

**Table 3.** *Pesantren* Typology and Numbers

No	Type	Remark	Number and Percentage of <i>Pesantrens</i>
1.	Traditional ( <i>Salafy</i> )	- Only teaches Islamic knowledge - Does not adopt national curriculum introduced by the government	8,000 <i>pesantrens</i> / 37 %
2.	Modern ( <i>Ashry</i> )	- Teaches Islamic knowledge and several secular subjects from the government curriculum - Develop their own curriculum	11,680 <i>pesantrens</i> / 45 %
3.	<i>Campuran</i> (a combination of Traditional and Modern)	- Runs formal madrasah/schools in the morning, and teaches Islamic subjects in the evening - Entirely following the government curriculum and develop their own curriculum	3,870 <i>pesantrens</i> / 18 %

Source: Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA, 2018)

*Pesantren* have access to the national curriculum and government funds. In this sense, besides the *pesantren* subjects, the *pesantren* teachers also teach various other subjects that are part of the government curriculum, which promote understanding and awareness of Indonesian cultural diversity, such as *Pendidikan Kewarganeraan* (*PKn* or Civic Education), Sociology and National

History. However, in the *pesantren* curriculum, the promotion of education concerning cultural diversity is taught in subjects such as *Akhlaq* (Islamic morality), *Qur'an/Hadith*, *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and *Tarikh Islam* (Islamic History). In fact, these subjects do not specifically deal with issues of multiculturalism, they provide a significant basis for teaching materials pertaining to cultural diversity in several parts. *Akhlaq* explains how a Muslim has to behave towards other cultures according to *Fiqh*. In *Fiqh*, several rules and guidance decreed by Muslim clerics to help Muslims manage their lives are taught to the students, including Islamic etiquette when encountering cultural diversity. As the principal guidance for Muslims, *Qur'an/Hadith* contains countless verses and narration, which the students have to study. All aspects of life are regulated in both the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*. Additionally, in *Tarikh Islam*, the students learn about the daily practices of past Muslim generations in encountering different religions, tribes, races, ethnicities and global cultures.

The combination of national and *pesantren* subjects, which teach multicultural values to the students is inculcated to generate a strong understanding and awareness of cultural diversity. Ultimately, it will contribute to a more harmonious and fair relationship among the cultural diversity of Indonesia which is compiled in *SARA* terms. In this regard, the practice of *tasamuh* plays a crucial role in educating the *pesantren* community regarding issues pertaining to *SARA*. The practice of *tasamuh* is embedded into national and *pesantren* subjects mentioned previously as well as in the extra-curricular activities. This study will further clarify them later in the result and discussion chapter.

### 3. Multicultural Education and *Tasamuh* Practice in *Pesantren*

Multicultural means various identities in which people are described, identified and treated in daily life shared by communities in many places and times (Parekh, 2006). These identities may consist of language, race, ethnicity, religion, class and social group. In this regard, religion and ethnicity play a central role in shaping identity. To avoid such a misunderstanding among people of diverse cultures, appropriate communication and interaction skills are essential to create harmonious relationships. This expertise covers multicultural values, such as tolerance, respect for others, appreciation of social justice and upholding a democratic life (Raihani, 2014). Education is considered a compatible system for instilling multicultural values, in which younger generations learn about the skills that are relevant to communicate and interact in a diverse global community.

Multicultural education is an educational process supporting pupils to have the ability to understand, respect, recognise and live comfortably with and work effectively in communities that consist of many different cultures (Gollnick and Chinn, 1986; Leicester, 1989). It also represents educational equality for students from various backgrounds helping them to acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills required for interaction in different communities and nations worldwide (Banks, 1997; 2010; Bennet, 1990; Lynch, 1986). The multicultural education learning process will work effectively in a whole-school approach (Raihani, 2014). This comprehensive approach is a combination of classroom and non-classroom learning activities. Classroom learning activities consist of every angle of teaching in the classroom, such as the delivery of subjects, whereas non-classroom learning activities comprise the educational process in the schoolyard, for instance extra-curricular activities. In a whole-school approach, comprehensive schooling aspects, such as learning methods, curriculum, subjects, school-community interaction and the school environment are adapted to encourage multicultural values to be disseminated to students. Thus, to develop multicultural education, schools require a transformation. This transformation mandates entire school bodies to change their attitude and behaviour from a mind-set that is monocultural to one that is multicultural in all aspects of school such as teaching, extra-curricular activities, etc (Raihani, 2012).

Banks (1993; 2009), proposes five dimensions as a useful starting point for the development of multicultural education. They are (1) content integration: incorporating instruction materials relating to culturally diverse groups in schools, (2) knowledge construction: multicultural-based in relation to developing the knowledge and science which will be delivered to the students, (3) equity pedagogy: teaching the students awareness of cultural differences, (4) prejudice reduction: avoiding suspicion and bias regarding all members of the school community such as principal, teacher, students and other stakeholders, and (5) the empowerment of school culture: establishing school to be hospitable multiculturally. Concerning the teaching of fairness, Osamwonyi (2016) states that in-service training for teachers is a pivotal way to improve teachers' ability to serve students with quality teaching including the sense of cultural difference awareness.

In Islam, the practice of *tasamuh* is a similar concept to multicultural education that teaches recognition of cultural diversity and understanding to Muslims. It is a way of various Muslim sects coexisting with non-Muslims and other cultures (Mutawalli, 2016). The concept of practising *tasamuh* has been disseminated amongst Muslims over decades and in numerous places since the time of the Prophets. *Tasamuh* practice consists of multicultural values and teachings, such as tolerance, respect and appreciation, as the basic theory, together with its implementation in the daily life of Muslims when encountering plural and diverse communities. Both basic theories and the application are translated from the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* as taught and modelled by Prophet

Muhammad, his early companions and furthermore, authoritative Muslims clerics (Jamaruddin, 2016). Thus, education concerning content relating to cultural diversity in the practice of *tasamuh* is strongly influenced by Islamic teaching. For instance, a chapter in the *Qur'an* called *al-Kaafiruun* (the Infidels), encourages Muslims to respect people with different religions and faiths and prohibits them from syncretizing Islamic values with other beliefs system. This chapter, *al-Kaafiruun*, says:

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ - لَا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ - وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ - وَلَا أَنَا عَابِدٌ مَّا عَبَدْتُمْ - وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ - لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ

Say, "O disbelievers. I do not worship what you worship. Nor are you worshippers of what I worship. Nor will I be a worshipper of what you worship. Nor will you be worshippers of what I worship. For you is your religion, and for me is my religion."

In this regard, Muslims have to obey this postulate by supporting and performing religious tolerance of non-Muslims. It is similar to what Prophet Muhammad did as regards his uncle, Abu Thalib. Prophet Muhammad had several uncles who supported his *da'wa* (calling) for Islam as well as those who were against his efforts. Even though he had a different set of beliefs and did not convert to Islam until the very end of his life, Abu Thalib supported Prophet Muhammad who did not coerce him into becoming a Muslim (Sirajid, 2007; Nahdhatul Ulama, 2018). In respecting diverse ethnicities, although Prophet Muhammad was an Arab, he mentioned that an Arab has no higher privilege over a non-Arab nor white people over black people except in their righteousness before God (*Allah*), which will increase their self-respect (Jamarudin, 2016).

*Tasamuh* practice has been passed down through Muslim generations along with other Islamic knowledge by means of teaching in the mosques, madrasas and Islamic schools across Islamic countries (Hefner and Zaman, 2007). In Indonesia, *tasamuh* practice is inculcated in Islamic educational institutions such as Qur'anic schools, *madrasas* and *pesantren*. Typically, subjects like *Akhlaq*, *Qur'an/Hadith*, *Fiqh* and Islamic history are taught as regards Islamic knowledge and also by way of sermons and Islamic studies in the mosques and other Muslim religious fora and events (Mutawalli, 2016). By practising *tasamuh*, *pesantren* communities have the ability to live together with other cultures peacefully. As stated by the leader of *NU*, which manages most of the *pesantren* in Indonesia, practising *tasamuh* along with *tawasuth* (moderate) teachings, means that Muslims in Indonesia will be able to promote religious tolerance, respecting various ethnicities and appreciating many kinds of local cultures, such as traditional dances and songs, folklore and customs. It is because to practice *tasamuh*, Muslims need morals since tolerance, respect and appreciation require personal values, such as kindness and sincerity which are emphasised by the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* (Tempo, 2019).

*Wasatiyya* (moderate) Islam is being accepted more in Indonesia as a part of Islam which neither follows radical Islam nor is it completely secular in outlook (Schlehe and Nisa, 2015). It has been playing a pivotal role in fighting radicalisation in the country (Jum'ah, 2012) as well as fitting with the Islamic vision of mainstream Islam in Indonesia, commonly represented by *NU* and *Muhammadiyah* as the first and second largest Islamic organisations respectively (Mukhsin et.al., 2008). In this study, *pesantren Assalaam* as a proponent of moderate Islam seeks to stand in the middle of and accommodate all Islamic groups, a collaboration with the government and even communication and interaction with non-Muslims or other cultures through a particular way, namely *tasamuh* practice.

*Tasamuh* practice has been performed in *pesantren* in the fields of religion, politics and social life. For example, regarding the religious sphere, Baidhaw (2007) and Ghazali (2013) explained that it is essential to instil multicultural-based theology in Islamic schools including *pesantren* to reduce claims made by each religion that theirs is the truth, which in turn can lead to inter-religious conflict. In this theology, *tasamuh* practice is a pivotal factor in minimising Muslim's claim that Islam is the one true religion to respect and tolerate. Muslims have to understand that non-Muslims also have their own beliefs. Instead of voicing this sensitive issue, promoting common interest among religions is necessary. A further instance is with respect to politics and the authoritarian period of the *Orde Baru* regime in the 1980s. At that time, *pesantren* decided to renounce political affairs and considered togetherness by strengthening the promotion of understanding cultural diversity by holding several inter-religious dialogues, managing many types of local cultural performances and other social inclusive events by way of using *tasamuh* practice. It was to counter the regime's policy which attempted to standardise Indonesian cultural diversity by introducing particular local customs, rituals, dances and clothes as the national identity, which was merely selected and defined by the regime, in order to make it easy to use its power (Kersten, 2015).

As *pesantren* typically have the same characteristics, particularly the inculcation of Islamic principles which include cultural awareness of diversity, there will be a similar effort in *pesantren* to introduce acknowledgment of Indonesia as a multicultural society via *tasamuh* practice. However, it should be mentioned that in doing so, the terms and method may vary among *pesantren*. The challenge remains as regards the interpretation of implementing cultural diversity; whether Muslims as the majority will be the dominant player or politely invite other cultures to manage this diversity.

Based on the previous explanation, this study defines *tasamuh* practice as a way of behaving which covers multicultural values, such as tolerance, cooperation, respect, togetherness, and appreciation rooted in the *Qur'an*, *Hadith*, and Islamic wisdom taught to *pesantren* students as the Muslim identity in encountering cultural diversity.

#### 4. Research Methods

A qualitative method with a case study approach is used as a suitable design to answer the research questions in this study. This approach provides a detailed picture of the case which not only focuses on the number of research objects but also the extensive types of documents and records, interviews, observations and physical artefacts (Creswell, 1998). Therefore, the fieldwork will produce sufficient data.

##### 4.1 Research Site

This research was conducted in *pesantren Assalaam* (means: peace). It is a *Campuran pesantren* located within a campus in Solo, Central Java, Indonesia comprising 10 hectares. This *pesantren* was established in 1982 to prevent extremism among Islamic organisations in Solo and to promote modern Islamic schools (Ricklefs, 2012). Solo is a multicultural city with six different religions that are recognised by the government and where people from various Indonesian ethnicities live together. Even though it is dominated by Javanese culture, other cultures are also celebrated, for instance Chinese and Arabic.

The slogan of *pesantren Assalaam* is to stand above and for all Muslims, regardless of their Islamic affiliations and organisational backgrounds. Thus, the distinctive feature of this *pesantren* is placing emphasis on moderate Islam that accommodates the values of multiculturalism. With over 2,200 JHS and SHS male and female students aged 13-18, *pesantren Assalaam* is one of the foremost and biggest *pesantren* in Indonesia. The students come from all 34 provinces across Indonesia as well as from different ethnic backgrounds, cultures, local languages, and Islamic organisations (See Table 4).

**Table 4.** Provincial Origin of *Pesantren Assalaam*'s Students

No	Provinces	%	Part of the Local Languages*	Famous local cultures*	Part of the Ethnicities*
1.	DI Aceh	1%	Gayo, Tamiang, Singkil	Saman dance, Bungong Jeumpa song	Gayo, Alas
2.	North Sumatera	1%	Batak, Karo	Tor-tor dance	Batak, Mandailing
3.	Riau	2%	Melayu	Zapin dance	Laut, Sakai
4.	West Sumatera	1%	Minang	Piring dance	Nias, Minangkabau
5.	DKI Jakarta	10%	Betawi	Tanjidor music, Jaipong dance	Betawi
6.	West Java	13%	Sunda	Golek puppet, merak dance	Sunda, Badui
7.	Central Java	45%	Java	Wayang, Serimpi dance	Java
8.	East Java	9%	Java	Reog dance	Java
9.	Bali	3%	Bali	Kecak dance	Bali
10.	Kalimantan	4%	Dayak, Banjar	Serumpai dance, kota baru song	Dayak
11.	West Nusa Tenggara	3%	Sasak, Manggarai	Gandrung Lombok dance	Sasak, Manggarai
12.	Sulawesi	1%	Bugis, manado	Bamba manurung dance	Bugis, Bone
13.	Papua	2%	Amungme, Asmat	Sajojo dance, Yamko rambe yamko song	Asmat, Dani
14.	Others	5%			

Source: *Pesantren Assalaam* Students Book 2018. \*Added by the author

Prior to conducting the research, the researcher obtained permission from the leader of *pesantren Assalaam*. As it is a private school, the researcher did not require authorisation from the Indonesian government. After gaining consent, the researcher visited *pesantren Assalaam* to meet the principal, teachers, as well as the students to conduct related data collection activities.

##### 4.2 Respondents

The researcher selected 19 male and female SHS students in total from every grade in addition to various ethnicities and



regions, as the respondents. The students at this level are considered mature enough to express their opinion. In addition, 52 male and female students in grade XII participated in filling out the questionnaire. Likewise, the *pesantren* leader, the principal and five teachers of specific subjects related to teaching cultural diversity were included as respondents (See Table 5).

Regarding ethical research, the researcher informed the respondents concerning the nature and purpose of this research. In this case, the participants understood the meaning of informed consent and hence were free to choose whether or not to withdraw from this study.

**Table 5.** The Profiles of the *Pesantren* Leader, Principal, Teachers and Students

No	Category	SHS Grade	Educational Level	Subjects	Number of respondents
1.	<i>Mudir</i> ( <i>pesantren</i> leader)	-	M.Ed. (Master's in Education) from the USA	-	1
2.	Principal	-	Master's in Islamic Studies	Islamic Education	1
3.	Teachers	-	Diploma and Masters	<i>PKn</i> , Sociology, National History, Extra-curricular activities	5
4.	Students	X, XI and XII	-	-	Interview : 19 Questionnaire: 52

Source: Field work

### 4.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher visited *pesantren Assalaam* in April 2017 and June 2018 to collect the data. In doing so, this study utilised a semi-structured questionnaire and open-ended interviews with the respondents, focusing on the practice of *tasamuh* in the *pesantren Assalaam* learning activities, the religious teachings influence on understanding cultural diversity and the implementation of *tasamuh* practice into the interactions that ethnicities undertake, among religious communication and in relationships with local cultures. Each respondent spent approximately 45 minutes participating in the interviews. The researcher also observed specific classes and extra-curricular activities. Finally, this study analysed documents related to the research topic, such as school documents, teacher's handbooks, magazines and newspapers.

The interviews were in the Indonesian language to help participants to understand and avoid unnecessary interpretation, as this language represents their *lingua franca*. The interviews were in-depth face-to-face interviews, consisting of a series of open-ended questions. All interviews were recorded on a mobile phone recording application and later transcribed into Indonesian and subsequently translated into English.

Data analysis after completing the fieldwork used the case study approach developed by Stake (1995) with the following plots: (1) create and organise data, (2) describe the case and its context, (3) establish the pattern of categories, (4) develop naturalistic generalizations, and (5) present narrative supplemented by tables or figures. In doing so, the researcher considered the concept, theory and dimension of multicultural education described in the literature review.

## 5. Results and Discussion

Based on Banks' model as regards transforming schools to have a multicultural ethos within five dimensions, this study found that *pesantren Assalaam* follows two curricula: national and *pesantren*. Within the national curriculum, the subjects which promote Indonesia's cultural diversity are taught in the SHS, such as *PKn*, Sociology, and National History. The *pesantren* curriculum contains material related to cultural differences in subjects like *Akhlaq*, *Tarikh* and *Aqidah* (Islamic faith). Both curricula are taught in the classroom during school time from 07.00–13.00 as formal learning, in the same vein as other national schools. Moreover, extra-curricular activities are also provided informally. As students reside in the school, these activities take place in the early morning before school, from 04:30–06:00; in the afternoon from 15:00–17:30, and in the evening from 19:30–21:30.

*Tasamuh* practice in *pesantren Assalaam* is conceived in a slogan termed *Panca Jiwa* (five spirits). It requires that in the future, students are capable of promoting moderate Islam and avoiding fanaticism, understanding Islamic teaching comprehensively, maintaining *akhlaqul karimah* (good manners and attitude), preach Islam in a subtle and non-coercive way, and have leadership skills that can be trusted (Kadariusman, 2005). These 'spirits' are additional to the national and *pesantren* curricula with the aim of reinforcing them. The teachers who teach cultural diversity related subjects and lead extra-curricular activities have

to insert these five values by emphasising the teaching and guiding materials with Islamic teachings sourced from the *Qur'an* and *Hadiith*.

Based on Arifin and Asrowi (2003), *pesantren Assalaam* outlined the *Qur'anic* chapters and verses that are the sources for the practice of *tasamuh*, as mentioned in Table 6 below:

**Table 6.** Chapter and verse in the *Qur'an* as the source of practising *tasamuh*

No.	Chapter and Verse in the Qur'an	Tasamuh element	Remark
1.	Chapter <i>An-Nisa'</i> (Women) verse 59	Obedience and Respect	Obey and cooperate with the government to keep communities living in harmony
2.	Chapter <i>al-Hujurat</i> (Chambers) verse 11	Tolerance	Accommodating all Islamic organisations and factions
3.	Chapter <i>al-Mumtahanah</i> (Tempted Women) verse 8	Tolerance	Tolerance of non-Muslims
4.	Chapter <i>al-Hujurat</i> verse 13	Appreciation	Appreciate and up hold all Indonesian communities and cultures

### 5.1 Students' Perspectives

This study interviews students regarding: (1) students' understanding of terms pertaining to multiculturalism and *tasamuh*. It is to clarify that the participants understood these terms correctly to avoid any misconception regarding the research. In addition, this understanding is the key foundation that the development of Islamic multicultural education through the practice of *tasamuh* is possible, (2) student's opinions on issues relating to *SARA*, and (3) the type of *tasamuh* being practiced in *pesantren Assalaam* and why is it important for education on cultural diversity.

The data indicated that more than 80% of the students' understood the term 'multicultural'. The interviews also demonstrated a similar result. They generally admitted that *multikultural* (Indonesian language for multicultural) is a society that consists of different religions, ethnicities, races, languages and cultural differences. However, this cultural diversity should be well managed to create social coexistence and a peaceful life. According to one male student, aged 17, *multikultural* is:

*Differences in society regarding religions, ethnicities and cultures that are given by God. So they should know each other and work together.*

Student's understanding of the concept of *multikultural* is further connected with the need to practice and preserve *tasamuh*. The term *tasamuh* is possibly familiar to them, as one of them, Abdul, a male aged 17, made the following statement:

*We have to propose tasamuh and implement it in our daily life to maintain the Indonesian multikultural. With tasamuh, the issue of SARA diversity which leads to conflict will be reduced. Through tasamuh practice, Allah, God, has commanded us to know each other and to coexist on earth.*

Regarding the practice of *tasamuh*, the students frequently cited many specific verses in the *Qur'an* and narrations taken from the *Hadiith* to support their arguments. It appears that the concept of *tasamuh* is commanded and guided directly by God, *Allah*, through the *Qur'an* and *Hadiith*. Therefore, they have to obey and follow it. For instance, 98% of students referred to *al-Kaafirun* verse 1-6 in the *Qur'an* as a reason for Muslims to accept religious tolerance with respect to non-Muslims. They argued:

*It is clear that we are prohibited from opposing non-Muslims, as mentioned in the Qur'an, chapter al-Kaafirun, verse 1-6. The core meaning of this verse is for you to be your religion and for me to be my religion...we have to cooperate and live in harmony with them.*

Baihaki (2017) investigates that chapter *al-Kaafirun* verse 1-6 in the *Qur'an* is an appropriate chapter for Muslims in Indonesia to promote and disseminate interreligious relationships. This chapter is the theological basis for them to accept and conduct interreligious relationships. For example, referring to this chapter, some Muslims believe that greeting their fellow Christians and Catholics on Christmas day is permitted as it is part of *tasamuh* practice and is common social behaviour in Indonesia. Conversely, several Muslims refer to *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (MUI or the Indonesian Muslim Clerics Council) verdict in 1981 and state that they are forbidden to congratulate Christians and Catholics with a Christmas greeting since this behaviour tends to mix Islam (CNN Indonesia, 2014).

Concerning the *SARA* issue, the students understood and acknowledged that this issue is a significant threat to Indonesian unity if all citizens fail to manage it appropriately. Hasanah, a female aged 18, commented:

*Religion, race and ethnicity or SARA differences are dilemmatic. On the one hand, they are able to enrich national cultures. On the other hand, they can be the source of cultural conflict in this country. Thus, we have to treat them carefully through a sort of cultural diversity learning.*

The above statement is critical, as based on a survey conducted by the Maarif Institute (2017), a small number of SHS students in Indonesia are influenced by Islamic radicalism. To address this issue, particular scholars (Yulaelawati and Kuipers, 2009; Raihani, 2012, 2014), propose multicultural education as one of the ways to instil the importance of understanding and being aware of *SARA* diversity.

Continuing with the interviews, the students also revealed that in *pesantren Assalaam*, the students are imbued with knowledge pertaining to *tasamuh* by their teachers so as to recognise the significance of *SARA* issues on particular subjects. As knowledge of *tasamuh* is typically rooted in *Qur'anic* sources, the students believe that cultural diversity is an undeniable reality. Fatimah, a female student aged 17 recounted:

*To endorse his statement about the importance of various religions and local beliefs, ethnicities, races and traditional cultures in Indonesia, besides explaining the materials in the handbook, the PKn teacher frequently quotes a verse from a Qur'anic chapter, like chapter al-Hujurat verse 13, which mandates Muslims to know all humans since God created many types of people. So, we have to know many tribes and races in this country. It reassures me that having an attitude which is tasamuh is significant as it is commanded by God, Allah.*

Another male student, Iwan, aged 17, stated that to complete the *tasamuh* knowledge, the students then practice it in various activities after school, such as in the dormitory by recognising each other's traditions and habits based on their ethnicities and races or meeting with their peers and colleagues who have different religions and cultures outside. He articulated that:

*The real application of practising tasamuh in this boarding school is in daily life when we are not in the school. As a Javanese, I can learn about Sundanese traditions from my roommate as he is a Sundanese. I have to respect his culture and, conversely, he has to respect Javanese traditions. Outside [pesantren] Assalaam, I have even met Christian students in a school sports competition in the city. We made friends, no problem. It is sunnatullah (commanded by God). Practising Tasamuh has changed my perspective about multicultural life.*

The assimilation of students' ethnicities in the dormitories provides valuable experience which enables them to familiarise themselves with different ethnicities both in Indonesia and beyond. As they experience this every day, it becomes a habit and it could be argued part of a hidden curriculum (Andarvazh *et al.*, 2017), which will benefit them in their lives in the future as they interact with other cultures and religions.

The implementation of *tasamuh* practice in *pesantren Assalaam* with respect to *SARA* diversity, which covers theory in formal teaching and experience in informal learning, is in line with the development of multicultural education proposed by Raihani (2012, 2014), which suggests a 'whole-school' approach.

## 5.2 Teachers' opinions

The researcher met with particular teachers who teach subjects related to cultural diversity. The questions the teachers were asked covered subjects in the national and *pesantren* curricula, the way they embed *tasamuh* material both in and outside the classroom and special training on the theory and implementation of practising *tasamuh*. Each teacher answered correctly that national subjects such as *PKn*, National History, and Sociology promote cultural diversity in Indonesia and how the students have to recognise and be aware of it. Particular mention of the objective of the materials in these subjects is the students' ability to preserve harmonious relationships among different religions, ethnicities and local cultures and traditions, which are part of the *SARA* issue. Puji, a female *PKn* teacher aged 57, stated:

*Besides my subject, PKn, which elaborates on the richness of Indonesian cultures and how citizens have to behave under the national constitution and law, there are another two subjects from the government curriculum in this pesantren which have material on multicultural education; National History and Sociology. National History especially emphasises awareness that Indonesia was built and established by many cultures, which consist of diverse ethnicities, tribes, religions and groups. Sociology particularly outlines the lifestyle and tradition of every culture in Indonesia.*

In addition, Faqih, a male *pesantren* curriculum teacher aged 50, said:

*There are many pesantren subjects that correlate with the dissemination of SARA awareness, such as Aqidah, Akhlak, Tauhid, as well as the Qur'an and Hadith.*

Bruinessen (2012) and Azra (2012), confirmed that a few *pesantren* subjects also cover education leading to the dissemination of cultural differences, such as *Tafsir*, *Akhlaq*, and *Qur'an/Hadith*. Meanwhile, Faoziah *et al.* (2016) also asserted that *PKn*, Sociology, and National History contain materials relating to cultural diversity which the students are taught.

As national and *pesantren* subjects are taught in the classroom, the researcher also conferred with one of the teachers who teaches extra-curricular activities regarding the implementation of *tasamuh* practice in the field. Kholis, a male teacher, aged 40, who usually guides and supervises the students in the field activities explained:

*We introduce the students to the reality that they live together in this pesantren in a very different manner, attitude and behaviour as they come from various social and cultural backgrounds. Thus, they have to respect and tolerate each other. Similarly, when they follow an event or competition outside the pesantren like Pramuka (scouting), the students have to be aware that their colleagues outside are also multi-cultural. We order the students to respect them and keep their good attitude and behaviour based on Islamic guidance.*

Scouting is an important compulsory extra-curricular activity based on MoEC decree number 63 Year 2014. The experience gained from *pesantren Assalaam* asserted that scouting is a significant non-school activity that enables students to practice their understanding of cultural differences.

Answering the question on how the teachers teach the students about *tasamuh* practice, most teachers answered in different ways. It is because *pesantren Assalaam* does not provide specific guidance on the syllabus to teach the practice of *tasamuh*. They only referred to *Panca Jiwa pesantren Assalaam* as the handbook. The articulation both in and outside the classroom is dependent on each schoolteacher's teaching skills. Generally, the teachers insert the practice of *tasamuh* into the subjects or activities as religious support and confirmation. Abdullah, a teacher of National History, aged 42, stated:

*Usually I read Panca Jiwa before meeting with the students and quote one pivotal point from it, and then look for the Prophet Muhammad's history which corresponds with my subject. For instance, we have to maintain this country's multi-culturalism as Prophet Muhammad did in Madinah when he was a leader. He managed a multi-cultural city where Jews and Christians coexisted with Muslims. Another teacher may use excerpts of a verse from the Qur'an as an example.*

To address the teachers' different ways of teaching the practice of *tasamuh*, Arif, a Sociology teacher aged 43, proposed in-service training for teachers to create a standard for teaching and modelling *tasamuh* practice. He said the following:

*I think teachers who teach the practice of tasamuh need in-service training to formulate the same method, materials, practice and model and how to deliver them to the students. Normally, we get frequent in-service training with other sociology teachers from the government but being instructed to combine it with tasamuh materials is difficult without special in-service training.*

In-service training is important for the teachers to maintain their teaching skills. Osamwonyi (2016), states that this training will retrain, re-skill, and update teachers' skills. Without in-service training for the teachers, then the teachers will establish their teaching skills based on their own understanding. As a result, the students taught by these teachers will have varied attainments given that every teacher educates the students in a different way. In fact, without standard syllabi guidance, uncertainty regarding teaching occurred when the author followed a *PKn* teacher in the classroom. In this case, she reminded the student to choose a Muslim governor rather than a non-Muslim. It was a comment on the heated issue of the gubernatorial election in 2017 in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia, where the candidates were a Muslim and non-Muslim. Instead of exploring the meritocracy of the candidates, the teacher opted for the Muslim candidate automatically. This is in contrast with the spirit of *Pancasila* and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, which allow all Indonesian citizens to be leaders in the governance sector and be governor, resident, and even president. In addition, this attitude is against the practice of *tasamuh*, besides, a significant number of Muslims actually, agree with non-Muslim leadership (Zakariya, 2017). In line with this, consequently, 95% of students state in their questionnaires that a non-Muslim is prohibited from being a governor or president in this country. She emphasised:

*As a Muslim, we have to elect a Muslim governor. This is what Islam commands us as mentioned in the Qur'an chapter al-Maidah verse 51; do not elect Jews and Christians as your leaders.*

To this point, *pesantren Assalaam* to some extent has the ability to develop and disseminate multicultural education via *tasamuh* practice. However, this effort still requires further development particularly in the way the practice of *tasamuh* is instructed.

### 5.3 Opinions of the Principal and the Leader

In *pesantren Assalaam*, the principal leader of the *pesantren* is called the *Mudir* (Director). This is a different term to other *pesantren*, which employ the term *Kyai*. The researcher interviewed both the school principal and *Mudir* in May 2018 regarding the philosophical establishment of *pesantren Assalaam* in multicultural Indonesia, especially Solo, as the site for this particular *pesantren*. In addition, the basic reason for this *pesantren* is to promote understanding of cultural diversity through *tasamuh* practice, how to implement it, as well as the pivotal mission of this endeavour were asked. The *Mudir* told the author that the philosophical establishment of this Islamic boarding school was to set up and disseminate Islam that is peaceful. As Solo at the time of the establishment in 1986 was culturally diverse, one of the objectives of this *pesantren* is to maintain peaceful relationships with various parties, both Muslims and non-Muslims. It should be mentioned that the Indonesian Communist Party attempted separate coup d'état to take over the official government in 1948 and 1965. Since then, the Indonesian Communist Party has become the most hated group in Indonesia, whilst the Chinese minorities domination over economic resources and strong Javanese culture encouraged a number of Muslims to become radical; factors which they strongly believed could threaten Islam (Ricklefs, 2012).

In addition, when other *pesantren* failed to collaborate with the government, *pesantren Assalaam* adopted the national curriculum from the beginning to demonstrate its commitment to the Indonesian government and the country. Furthermore, one of the goals of *pesantren Assalaam* is to promote understanding and awareness of the archipelago's *multikultural* reality. This is essential to prevent conflict relating to *SARA* in Indonesia. Among the ways to achieve this dream is through *tasamuh* practice. *Mudir* said:

*Since its early establishment, pesantren Assalaam is to contribute to a peaceful Indonesia and to take a moderate position. This could be pursued in three ways: first, peace to all Muslims, regardless of their Islamic organisations and sects. Second, providing moderate Islam to the students that respect all humanity through teaching and practising tasamuh. For this, we formulated Panca Jiwa pesantren Assalaam. Third, is to collaborate positively with the government and other citizens.*

Turning to the question of how the practice of *tasamuh* is delivered to the students, it was confirmed that there is no specific guidance with respect to teaching *tasamuh* practice in *pesantren Assalaam*. Teachers have to take the initiative in expanding upon *Panca Jiwa* as the source of teaching and practising *tasamuh*. The principal explained:

*We have not yet designed a specific syllabus for the teachers. We just encourage the teachers to look into the Panca Jiwa in propagating tasamuh practice to the students. We only give the outline that this boarding school is a proponent of Indonesian cultural diversity. Please, the teachers quote the virtues of the Qur'an and Hadith to support their subjects related to cultural diversity education to expand upon the reference from the government.*

Regarding multicultural education, the Indonesian government have introduced significant policy to encourage this sort of education in the country's schools. Besides, subjects such as *PKn*, National History and Sociology, the MoRA has developed a curriculum handbook concerning Islamic education based on multicultural education for secondary schools; specifically *Pendidikan Agama Islam berbasis Multikultural* (multicultural based Islamic education) in 2010 (the MoRA, 2013). In general, this book stresses the importance of including multicultural values, such as religious tolerance, respecting different ethnicities and appreciating Indonesian traditional cultures in Islamic education delivered to students. However, the implementation of this curriculum in the field is unknown as, at the time of this research, *pesantren Assalaam* did not recognise this book.

To verify the data collected from the questionnaire, interviews, and school documents, the researcher observed a significant feature of the implementation of *tasamuh* practice in *pesantren Assalaam*; the performance of the annual *Mahakarsa Islamic and Nusantara Art* show organised by both male and female student organisations with the aim of appreciating Indonesian local cultures. In this performance, various local Indonesian costumes are created, many of the country's local, national and Arabic songs are sung and different Islamic and local archipelago dances presented.

This large state-of-the-art show involves some five hundred student actors/actresses and thousands of local spectators from throughout Solo. Answering the question on why they performed such an unusual show in *pesantren*, a female respondent, Indah aged 17, who was involved in this show, said that she was happy to live in a country like Indonesia, as it has a vast, diverse culture. She really appreciates this atmosphere. Being a Muslim and studying in *pesantren* does not prevent her from showcasing such a performance since the practice of *tasamuh* in Islam allows this sort of cultural entertainment as long as it considers the Islamic

rules found in the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*.

*It is my pleasure to be involved in this cultural show. Even though for some Muslims it is forbidden to dance or sing, for me, the practice of tasamuh has taught us that it is no problem as long as it does not exceed the limit allowed by Islam, like dancing together with smoking, drinking alcohol or getting drunk or something like that. This is my appreciation of this country's cultural richness.*

This study acknowledges that *pesantren Assalaam* is promoting multicultural education. However, this effort has to be combined with the government's policies on cultural diversity to meet the expectation of various stakeholders such as teachers, the government and parents, seeing that at present, multicultural education is necessary in Indonesia (Hanurawan and Waterworth, 2007; Rachmawati *et al.*, 2014). Thus, it is appropriate for *pesantren Assalaam* to campaign for its cultural diversity education to be disseminated to other *pesantren* and Islamic schools across the country to reduce *SARA* conflict and violence, mainly by spreading religious tolerance, respect ethnicities, and appreciating local cultures by way of *tasamuh* practice.

## 6. Conclusion

This work implies that *tasamuh* practice can play a pivotal role in supporting the development of multicultural education in *pesantren*. The classroom learning activities of *pesantren*, as well as its non-classroom programmes, illustrates evidence of this claim. In this case, *tasamuh* practice in *pesantren* has been implemented in three ways: *firstly*, providing an explicit and clear multicultural vision of the institution as a robust philosophical foundation. *Secondly*, supporting the instruction of national and *pesantren* subjects related to cultural diversity by inserting verses from the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* to the students during the classroom activities. These additions function to promote a greater understanding of cultural diversity based on the religious teachings. And, *thirdly*, implementing *tasamuh* practice in after school activities held on and off *pesantren*, such as in daily school life, school competitions, in addition to music and arts performances.

The practice of *tasamuh* in *pesantren* has at least three essential roles in supporting and improving the development of multicultural education. *Firstly*, supporting the recognition and understanding of *SARA* issues relating to Indonesia in its learning processes. *Secondly*, completing the current aspect of multicultural education with the concept of Islamic tolerance. *Thirdly*, showing that *pesantren* are far removed from their portrayal as hotspots for disseminating radical Islam. In doing so, *tasamuh* practice utilises religious teachings as an important factor.

To improve the development of multicultural education in *pesantren* via *tasamuh* practice, certain crucial measures are required. They are teachers being consistent concerning theory and execution, avoiding claims related to religious truth, managing in-service training for the teachers, and designing specific syllabi as guidance. Regarding teachers being consistent, each *pesantren* stakeholder has to have a strong commitment to developing multicultural education through *tasamuh* practice. There is no place for ambiguity between attitude and action in the educational process. Furthermore, considering the claim relating to religious truth, the *pesantren* community should increase inter-faith dialogue and understanding so as to reduce the claim that someone's own religion is the only path for people to follow seeing as other religions are mistaken. In addition, it is necessary for the *pesantren* community to create particular syllabi related to teaching cultural diversity based on *tasamuh* practice and to disseminate this syllabi to the teachers in particular in-service training.

This study has a few limitations such as the narrow scope of the respondents, seeing as it did not involve other *pesantren* stakeholders, for instance parents and related government authorities. In addition, it only included one *pesantren* in the research. It would be better if the research had included several *pesantren* so that a more comprehensive picture could have been acquired. It is also worth pointing out that for further research, a study should be conducted on the effectiveness of practising *tasamuh* to support the development of multicultural education in *pesantren*.

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